

VZCZCXRO7679  
PP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHDS #3601/01 3551121  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 211121Z DEC 07  
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8925  
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHINGTON DC 0082

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 003601

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E, DRL FOR SJOSEPH, AND INR/B  
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER  
CJTF-HOA AND CENTCOM FOR POLAD  
USAID FOR AFR, OFDA, DCHA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [ET](#)  
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: UN AND NGOS EXPRESS FRUSTRATION OVER  
GOE'S LACK OF COORDINATION IN OGADEN

REF: ADDIS ABABA 3586

ADDIS ABAB 00003601 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASON 1.4(D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Key UN agencies and prominent international NGOs told Poloff in meetings on December 20 that, despite much of the progress discussed in the December 14 meeting at the Ambassador's residence (reftel), GoE bureaucratic challenges and deliberate interference at the local, regional and federal level continue to threaten their ability to respond to the humanitarian crisis in the Ogaden region. Local government officials interfered with a recent joint UN/GoE nutritional assessment mission to the degree that this essential evaluation of future regional aid from the UN may be rendered unusable. Furthermore, though 14,000 metric tons of food has reached woreda (county) capitals, WFP reports that only approximately five percent has actually been distributed to feeding sites, and almost none in rural areas. Though 19 NGOs have been "cleared" by the GoE to work in the region, only Medicines Sans Frontieres-Switzerland has managed over the last six weeks to clear the baffling bureaucratic hurdles necessary to enter the region. Both assessment and response missions are vital to averting a humanitarian disaster in the Ogaden, but delay and inaction by local officials are preventing these from taking place. The U.S. is clearly the leader and coordinator on relief to the Somali Region of Ethiopia. While there are obstinate local officials, those we have met, particularly DPPA, have urged more food, trucks and money, as well as continued food aid beyond the current crisis. Post will continue to lead multilateral efforts in pressuring both national and regional GoE officials to facilitate UN and NGO activity in the Ogaden. Further, the current USAID Humanitarian Assistance Team (HAT) team now present in Ethiopia will soon begin their own assessment mission to evaluate the current situation on the ground. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Following a December 14 meeting of diplomatic missions, UN organizations and NGOs at the Ambassador's residence to discuss the current situation in the Ogaden (reftel), Poloff met privately with working-level representatives of the WFP, UNICEF, as separately with representatives of Save the Children UK (STC UK), Action Contre la Faim (ACF) and Medicines Sans Frontieres (MSF)-Belgium, on December 20 to follow-up on some of their

complaints and criticisms.

-----  
UN: ASSESSMENT RESTRICTED, FOOD FLOW LIMITED  
-----

13. (C) Representatives of UNICEF and WFP expressed their concern over GoE interference in the joint nutritional assessment mission conducted by the WFP and the federal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA) that was completed on December 17. They pointed out that, in this first evaluation mission of the UN to the region since September, only 30 percent of the UN proposed evaluation sites were permitted by the DPPA to be visited and that those sites were primarily in urban and nearby areas where there is less concern over food security. Furthermore, despite having agreed upon evaluation modalities in advance, in urban areas where assessments were actually allowed to take place, local DPPA (DPPB) officials had gathered children in advance for examination, rather than allowing for random sampling. Perhaps not coincidentally, many of these children appeared to be among the best-fed in town. Though the UN team was able to push back on this issue and force a random sample, in other areas the DPPB limited the number of children evaluated, thus threatening the statistical relevance of the sample. The UN representatives were uncertain whether or not the findings of the mission would be adequate enough for the UN to consider it a valid assessment of the area, but the team compiling the results will likely present the final results after the Christmas holiday. This is particularly concerning, they said, because the intent of the study is to serve as a basis for the UN's response to the humanitarian situation over the next several months. Despite the apparent lack of data, the team was able to preliminarily estimate that as many as 1.6 million residents of the region are in need of food aid, with 722,000 considered "survival

ADDIS ABAB 00003601 002.2 OF 003

deficient" and 902,000 are "livelihood deficient."

14. (C) The WFP and UNICEF representatives were similarly frustrated with the speed by which the GoE has acted since the UN's last assessment in September. Though they praised the eventual dispatch of the summer and fall scheduled food aid (over 14,000 metric tons), WFP indicated that perhaps only 5 percent has actually made it to the feeding sites, and that those were primarily in urban areas. (NOTE: The five percent is only an estimate, as WFP has not been permitted by the GoE to monitor all food deliveries to sites. END NOTE.) The problem with the delivery of the remainder, as WFP is told, is lack of capacity (i.e. money to pay workers, delivery trucks, etc.) at the local level. The WFP representative told Poloff, "Woreda capitals have plenty of food now. The problem remains the rural areas."

15. (C) Other areas of concern to the UN representatives are the flow of commercial traffic and the lack of medical response to the area. Though some commercial traffic has increased to the primary urban areas, they noted, livestock markets remain stagnant and prices for commodities high. The limitation to anecdotal evidence hampers their commercial market evaluation, though, and the UN plans a market survey at the beginning of January to get a clearer picture of the current situation. UNICEF raised the importance of an immediate healthcare response in the region, though permission has yet to be granted by the GoE for mobile health units to be deployed. Measles and other diseases remain a top concern, and an inoculation campaign is desperately needed to avoid potential health disasters in the area. UNICEF continues to train health workers, regardless, and remains confident that access to affected areas will be granted in coming weeks.

-----  
NGOS STUCK IN WEB OF RED TAPE  
-----

16. (C) The commonly heard complaint from NGOs intending to either begin or resume operations in the Ogaden is lack of access. On November fifth and thirteenth, the DPPA issued letters granting permission for 19 NGOs to begin work in the Somali region. At that time, only two international NGOs were working in the area\*-ACF and Medicines du Monde. After the DPPA issued what appeared to be straightforward, albeit controversial, guidelines for what NGOs must do to enter (or reenter) the region, few have made it through the bureaucratic hoops necessary to begin work. In fact, at this time, both ACF and MDM have been told they are restricted from working in the region due to the fact that they were not on the list of NGOs from the DPPA.

17. (C) Representatives from ACF, STC UK, and MSF-Belgium reported that the list of four steps that a NGO must complete to work in the Somali region is seemingly easy to complete:

- a. Register with the Ministry of Justice as an NGO (something that any NGO in the country has done anyway);
- b. Sign an operational agreement with the DPPA (again, something they had done when they began work in Ethiopia);
- c. Negotiation of a project document with the regional government (normal procedure); and
- d. Submit a list of local staff working in the region to the DPPA.

The final step has been highly controversial (also now required for UN staff in the region). Many NGOs bristled at having to submit a list of their staff for fear that they would potentially be harassed by security forces. Nevertheless, most NGOs are reported to either be willing to submit this list, or else have already done so.

18. (C) Most NGOs are caught up in red tape in dealing with the regional administration in step C above. MSF and STC UK report that they have had positive meetings with the regional president in which he says he will sign off on the project document, only to have it stuck when going back to the federal level for review. Sometimes, vise versa. Other NGOs have reportedly received the regional president's approval on the project document, only to have their access to the region denied by the military because they don't have a letter from the regional president allowing them access. The only NGO

ADDIS ABAB 00003601 003.2 OF 003

not yet caught in the web of (possibly intentional) bureaucratic red tape is MSF-Switzerland, which is currently operational in the Fiq area.

19. (C) Having heard details of the recent UN/DPPA nutritional assessment mission, NGO representatives expressed concern over the accuracy and the extent of data collection. (NOTE: STC UK, when they had access to the area, was the only NGO to have completed a nutritional survey in the region. In October they found global acute malnutrition levels of 20.8 percent and severe acute malnutrition levels of 1.4 percent in the Fiq area. STC UK representative told Poloff that the results had been widely accepted at the technical level of the GoE, but after a BBC report aired quoting the study, the GoE publicly dismissed STC UK's findings, criticizing their assessment techniques. The GoE later expelled two international STC UK representatives four days after arriving in country. END NOTE.) NGOs said that nutritional and health surveys are critically needed in all parts of the region, not just the areas covered by the UN, and that they are ready and able to complete these when and if access is granted.

-----  
COMMENT: GOE DISCONNECT PERPETUATING EMERGENCY  
-----

110. (C) Though top GoE officials express desire to quickly respond to the current food and livelihood security emergency in the Ogaden, lack of communication, capacity and willingness on the part of local officials and military are

keeping the region on the brink of disaster. Local government interference with a UN nutritional assessment and lack of capacity to deliver the regularly scheduled food aid to the area is perpetuating the critical food needs situation in the area. In a normal year, hundreds of thousands of people need food aid in the region. Due to counterinsurgency operations against the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the UN, NGOs and diplomatic missions have only been allowed a glimpse into the area, leading only to speculation about how wide the humanitarian emergency has spread this year. NGOs remain mired in red tape, preventing the organizations that are able to respond the quickest to the likely dire food and health needs of the area. Similarly, food aid remains piled high in county capitals for lack of ability to get it out to rural dwellers. Post remains engaged, both bilaterally and as lead mission in the diplomatic community, in pressing the GoE at all levels to open access to the area. During USAID Administrator Fore's visit to Gode, the DPPA and regional governor requested more food aid, trucks and money. They also urged continued assistance beyond the current crisis. The U.S. is clearly the leader and coordinator on aid. Ambassador continues to regularly meet key GoE representatives to reiterate the need for a rapid and thorough response to the region's needs. With the lack of an extensive assessment mission completed to-date, the USAID HAT team's current presence in Ethiopia should provide the most accurate picture of the humanitarian situation currently in the Ogaden, if their operations are permitted unimpeded.

YAMAMOTO